



Grain

“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it ever more fully in your heart.” – Francis of Assisi

Field

18Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” 24When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus. Matthew 1:18-25

Thoughts by Judy Mills, Madison

As John the Baptist is being held in prison, he hears about what Jesus is doing and has doubts as to whether Jesus is truly the Messiah that John had proclaimed would soon arrive. Clearly, John had his own ideas about what the Messiah would do. Perhaps Jesus wasn't living up to his expectations. In last week's Gospel, John spoke of the Messiah as one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire and would wield a winnowing fork to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. John may have hoped that Jesus would consider attempting to overthrow the rulers of the day, people such as Herod, who had imprisoned John.

Like many others, John had misconceptions about the way Jesus was to spread his message. Jesus told John's disciples to tell him what Jesus was doing: restoring sight to the blind, allowing the lame to walk and the deaf to hear and bringing good news to the poor. He gave a new commandment to his disciples: love one another as I have loved you. He resisted unjust power during his ministry but did not aspire to rule on Earth. He told his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world. Nevertheless, his words and deeds greatly challenged the existing religious and political leaders.

As we enter the second week of Advent, and Christmas draws nearer, what are our expectations for the baby Jesus? Are we hoping that he will grow into a man who wields a winnowing fork to smite those with whom we disagree? Do we long for a leader who will be the undoing of those with different politics? Or do we hope for a Messiah who will help us to resist injustice by spreading a message of love and compassion in our personal lives and through advocacy? Happy Advent and Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Judy Mills, friend of LOPPW